

Chapter 1

Introduction

Reference of the bill

1.1 On 7 December 2006 the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 (the bill) was referred to the Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee for inquiry and report by 20 February 2007.

Purpose of the bill

1.2 The object of the bill is to amend the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (the Act) to maintain the financial viability of the Commonwealth Workers Compensation Scheme (the scheme). The scheme has come under growing pressure from increasing numbers of accepted claims, longer average claims duration and higher claim costs.

1.3 The scheme covers Commonwealth employees (except members of the Australian Defence Force, who are covered by separate legislation), Australian Capital Territory public service employees and employees of certain private-sector corporations who self insure under the scheme.

1.4 The bill will also improve the administration and provision of benefits and amend the funeral benefit provisions of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRC Act) to maintain parity with benefits under the Act.¹

Submissions

1.5 The committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* newspaper on 12 December 2006, and invited submissions by 22 January 2007. Details of the inquiry, the bill, and associated documents were placed on the committee's website. The committee also contacted 15 organisations.

1.6 The committee received 28 submissions which are listed at Appendix 1. Submissions were placed on the committee's website for ease of access by the public.

1.7 The committee held public hearings in Melbourne on 30 January 2007 and 31 January 2007 and in Canberra on 8 February 2007. A list of witnesses who appeared

1 Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 30 November 2006, p. 3 and Explanatory Memorandum, p. 2.

at the hearing is at Appendix 2 and copies of the Hansard transcript are available through the Internet at <http://aph.gov.au/hansard>.

Acknowledgment

1.8 The committee thanks those organisations and individuals who made submissions and gave evidence at the public hearing.

Note on references

1.9 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the committee, not to a bound volume. References to the committee Hansard are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard Script.